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ABSTRACT

The international intern program at Clemson University is designed to help solve the problem of inadequate American expertise in international trade. The program seeks to: help students quality for international internships; provide the international business community with interns from various disciplines; establish a network composed of a corporate sponsor, student intern, and faculty advisor; and develop educational programs for business that focus on international trade and marketing. A total of 450 firms involved in international trade were mailed questionnaires, as were an additional 100 potential exporters. In addition, 30 firms and organizations were interviewed regarding their interest and support of an international intern position. Nineteen responded favorably, and 30 intern positions were generated by these firms. Although internship applications were heavily concentrated in engineering (39 percent), substantial progress was made toward increasing interest among other disciplines. Interest forms for the program were completed by college students, and high school students were also contacted. Conferences focusing on international economic interdependence were attended by business and government representatives to promote the international intern program. (SW)

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Internationalizing Cooperative Education at Clemson University

Prepared by

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Introduction

Clemson University and South Carolina provide a unique opportunity for students entering an international field. This state, along with North Carolina and Georgia, has many firms, both domestic and foreign owned, engaged in all aspects of international trade. Of the over 600 S.C. companies trading on the world market in 1983, about one-third were foreign owned and of these 35 percent were West German, 26 percent British, 15 percent French, 11 percent Japanese, 9.0 percent Swiss, and 6.0 percent Dutch.[1] Opportunities for student internships exist in agriculture, chemicals, metals, paper and print, textiles and trade related services.

Between 1977 and 1980, exports of South Carolina manufactured products increased 104 percent to $4.3 billion. In the last fiscal year alone, the state sold almost $400 million worth of agricultural products to world markets.[2] Foreign investments accounted for almost one-tenth of the state's total investment, with foreign manufacturing firms investing over $4 billion in South Carolina since 1960. A recent State Development Board estimate indicates that 54,000 jobs in the state depend directly on exports.

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Background

With a 1983-84 matching grant under Title VI, Part B of the Higher Education Act, Clemson has been able to lay the groundwork for systematic and selective internationalizing of student work assignments available through the Office of Cooperative Education. The program is designed to enhance the international skills of future business managers, marketing and trade experts, accountants, engineers, architects, computer specialists, agricultural economists, and scientists. Clemson's graduates who have participated in the international internship program will be extremely well qualified as employees to help develop or expand their employers' capabilities in international trade.

Clemson's innovative intern program places it on the edge of a new frontier in international commerce. Project consultant Dr. Ray Schaub, Director of Languages and International Trade at Eastern Michigan University, was "very impressed by the high level of organizational success ... and hard work done by the project team ... in designing a basic strategy of interdisciplinary cooperation." This evaluation reiterates the recommendations of a 1982 campus-wide needs assessment of the status of international affairs commissioned by the dean of the College of Liberal Arts. This earlier self-study concluded that international and intercultural education must transcend specific disciplines and colleges. The need for colleges to interact and collaborate is but a microcosm of the need for universities to establish an open forum with industry. The implications are especially significant as they relate to curriculum development, and the success is directly related to the diverse disciplines represented in the student

applicants and the multiple needs of the industries and agencies engaged in commerce abroad.

Jointly administered by the Colleges of Liberal Arts and Agricultural Sciences, along with the Cooperative Education Office, the intern option places great importance on the potential benefits of the purposeful blending of a technical and a liberal arts education.

Job development thus far has been most successful in the more technically oriented disciplines (e.g. agricultural marketing, computer science, engineering), areas which traditionally are strong at Clemson. However, a vigorous effort is underway to develop promotional material and a network of advisors which will emphasize to the student the importance of combining course work in internationally related areas, like foreign languages, geography, and international marketing and politics, with whatever major is chosen.

The primary objective of the international intern program is to help provide a solution to the problem of inadequate American expertise in international trade. It fulfills this objective by: (1) making it possible for our students to qualify for international internships, (2) providing the international business community with interns from various disciplines who are well prepared and eager to get some international hands-on experience, (3) setting up a corporate sponsor/student intern/faculty advisor network to provide the climate for a mutually productive relationship between multinational firms and the diverse faculty and students who contribute to the international competence of Clemson University, and (4) developing educational programs for business which focus on international trade and marketing.

Procedure

In order to provide structured internship opportunities, the grant team contacted businesses, agencies, and organizations involved in international trade. Mailing lists were not readily available, therefore, the first task was to identify firms with potential as international intern employers. The state industrial directory provided an initial list of 300 manufacturing firms that had international operations. An additional 150 service businesses and exporting companies were identified through personal contacts, the S.C. State Development Board, the S.C. Department of Agriculture, the S.C. State Ports Authority, and the U.S. Department of Commerce. Personal contacts were used to identify 30 promising businesses and organizations outside the state. These 480 firms were contacted by mail in late November and follow-up mailing in January and February. Meanwhile, telephone contact was made with 100 high potential firms. The grant team believed it imperative in most cases to talk directly with top management personnel. Personal interviews followed with 30 companies.

During either the telephone screening or the personal interview, the following program benefits were explained: student interns are a low risk, minimal cost way of looking at potential employees, they very often bring some degree of international expertise to the job, they are more mature and innovative than the average summer employee, regular employees could be released for other tasks, seasonal peaks could be more easily handled, and international interns would be upperclass or graduate students with better defined goals than the younger co-op students. Prospective employers were informed that unlike traditional co-op, which requires a minimum of three work periods, the international internship program could be a one time work period lasting up to six

months or more. Interns would be supervised by the faculty and would be expected to make two written reports on the job assignment, one at mid-point and one upon completion, to aid in both the formative and summative assessments of the overall program, in addition to an optional professional paper which may be done for credit.

Student interest in the program was surveyed by contacting the academic departments and requesting that they in turn pass out questionnaires in class. A slide-tape presentation was made for incoming freshmen and for use in state high schools to stimulate interest among juniors and seniors. Brochures and posters were developed to explain the program to faculty, students, and businesses.

To make the program effective, campus-wide support was sought within each college. Much time and effort were spent identifying interested faculty and administrators to serve as points of contact on the interdisciplinary team. Several formal planning sessions were held to discuss the main aspects of the program and to identify interest among faculty. From these sessions emerged a group to serve as the nucleus of the internship program. Weekly meetings have been held throughout the year to assist with the planning and evaluation process.

Implicit in the development and implementation of an education program in international trade was the task of identifying selected clientele and their educational needs. During the first trade conference held in April 1982, a survey of businesses was taken to determine interest in international trade and marketing programs offered by the university. The sample was not large enough to be representative; therefore, an initial step was to identify both exporting and potential exporting firms in the state and their

educational needs. Since only 450 were identified as already involved in international trade, it was decided to take a census of this group. Each firm was mailed a questionnaire, with two follow-up mailouts if required. An additional 100 potential exporters were identified and will be surveyed in late June.

Based upon survey results, programs will be started in international agricultural marketing, international economic interdependence, and current issues in international trade. Although still in the planning stages, these programs will be marketed directly to internationally oriented firms in a five state region of South Carolina, North Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee, and Virginia. The survey also will be indispensible in planning subsequent trade conferences and in recommending curriculum changes.

Results

Since the goal was to provide structured international internship positions for students, that will be addressed first, followed by a discussion of other program objectives.

Thirty firms/organizations were interviewed regarding their interest and support of an interrational intern position. Of this total, 19 responded favorably with either a verbal or written commitment yielding a 63 percent favorable response rate. A total of 30 intern positions were generated by these 19 firms resulting in an average of 1.6 positions per favorable response. These internships are a part of continuing cooperative agreements between Clemson University and the firms.

Although actual placements have not been completed for all 30 possible positions, seven organizations presently are interviewing

potential interns for immediate placement:

1) The state ports authority was able to place three interns, two in civil engineering and one in marketing. These positions should be filled by early summer and may last up to six months.

2) Robert Bosch Corporation will select sophomores in engineering and computer science who will work two regular co-op periods with Bosch in Charleston on an alternating schedule of work/study (Bosch/Clemson). Campus semesters will combine students' major studies with at least 14 semester hours of German, preparing them for a final six month work period with the Bosch parent plant in Germany.

3) Union Carbide has offered to place two students in the U.S. for three months of product training followed by three months in Sudan. The latter three months would be repeated in the fall.

4) The Foreign Agricultural Service, USDA, will be employing two interns, one in the trade policy branch to analyze the impact of Spain and Portugal entering the European Economic Community and one in the statistical branch. The initial length of service will be six months with an optional two month follow-up.

5) Global Trading, Inc. of South Carolina has agreed to place one student in its Mexican food processing plant to learn export mechanics. The potential also exists for the placement of one student at a similar facility in France.

6) The Columbia District Office of the U.S. Department of Commerce already had four students prepare market profiles on textiles and food products. These studies will now be made available to potential exporting firms at a nominal charge.

7) Hartness International, a Greenville based firm operating in

over 50 countries, has an interest in someone experienced in international marketing. One candidate has applied and it appears there is an extremely good chance of placement.

Early program developments, particularily the prospects for overseas placement and the enthusiastic support of businesses and students, have been promising. Therefore, it has been fairly easy to gain support among faculty from many colleges. This support has led to stronger interdisciplinary ties and more student participation in the international intern program and will be particularly critical in the area of curriculum development.

From November 1983 through March 1984, 136 students completed interest inventory forms for the intern program. The number of students in Cooperative Education went from 400 to 561, or an increase of 40 percent. Almost 85 percent of that increase was directly attributable to the international intern program.

Efforts were made to involve students from all disciplines in the intern program. Since the Cooperative Education Program has been composed of 85 percent engineering students, it was necessary to make contacts in other colleges and seek their support in increasing the number of students in the international intern program. The following majors were represented in the program through May 1984 (Table 1).

Although internship applications were heavily concentrated in engineering (39 percent), substantial progress was made toward increasing interest among other colleges. Applicants from Commerce and Industry represented 22 percent of the total, followed by Liberal Arts (19 percent), Agricultural Sciences (8 percent) and Sciences (6 percent). Architecture, Education, and Forestry represented five

percent of all applicants. These figures represent a significant departure from the skewed distribution of participants in regular Cooperative Education where 85 percent have been engineers. The success of involving every college (except Nursing) in the international internship program can be attributed to the effforts of the interdisciplinary grant team.

The foreign language component of this group of initial applicants is impressive when compared to the average student population. Almost half had received more than one year of formal language training, compared to 15 percent nationwide (Table 2). Of this total, 43 percent were trained in French, 25 percent in Spanish, and 19 percent in German. The international student factor accounts for about ten percent of the total. It should be noted that 12 percent were trained in other languages including Japanese and Italian. These students represent a vast resource of technical skill and expertise readily available to serve the international business community.

Visits were scheduled with selected high schools throughout the state. Over 200 high school students were contacted regarding program requirements and benefits. These visits will be continued throughout the year and will include freshmen in addition to upperclassmen, in order to emphasize the importance of proper preparation for a career in international business.

The development and implementation of an educational program in international trade and marketing involved four basic steps: (1) identifying clientele and their needs, (2) developing specific programs to meet those needs, (3) implementing these programs, and (4) measuring program success.

In many educational programs the existence of a solid clientele is already in place. Such was not the case in the area of international marketing. It was the responsibility of the grant team to identify, develop, and cultivate international business interests. Three major groups were identified: (1) leaders from agencies, organizations, and government, (2) faculty and administrators, and (3) business leaders and representatives with involvement in international markets and marketing. The needs of these groups were assessed through a mail and telephone survey. Specific programs were developed to focus on interests expressed by the groups.

The initial program was an issue oriented trade conference focusing on international economic interdependence, attended by 135 business and government representatives. Panel discussions ranged from basic trade theory to the effects of third world debt on the U.S. trade position. Representatives from government, business, and academia served as panel participants and moderators. Proceedings from this conference will be published and mailed to all registrants. All sessions were taped and are a part of a continuing video-tape library.

To highlight developments in the international intern program, a second conference was held featuring speakers from agencies and businesses. Their perceptions and attitudes about international internships were related to an audience of 85 administrators, faculty, and students. The focus of the program was on internship benefits to business and the role student interns might play in each organization. An informal reception was held after the program to allow for all to meet. Future conferences will focus on issues, problems, and curriculum development in international trade and marketing.

Effective marketing of these educational programs is an integral component of development and maintenance of the overall concept. This involved identifying the audience and developing the media to reach that audience most effectively. Since most marketing was direct mail, spot mass media advertising became a key to having good attendance. People tended to associate importance of the event with the amount and frequency of media attention it received. Therefore, news releases were sent to area and state newspapers, radio and television stations, and trade magazines and newsletters. The major wire services also were contacted and responded well.

Although the spot media campaigns were effective in generating attendance at conferences, a comprehensive, continuing program of media coverage is necessary to provide full coverage of the whole program. Media outlets such as the state radio network, trade association magazines and leaflets, and educational television can prove useful in introducing and publicizing the intern program and associated events. This media creates a public awareness of the program and lends creditability to those directing it.

Conclusions and Implications

The early, positive results of the International Intern program reinforce the underlying premise upon which the program is based: that businesses need, and are in many cases seeking, ways of enhancing their international expertise and student interns can be a crucial link. South Carolina and Clemson University provide a unique environment where a program of this type can reach its full potential.

Before this potential can be attained, however, several logical extensions of current program aspects should be made. First,

internships must be established with corporate headquarters located in other states. Receiving a firm commitment to the international intern concept from major multinational and domestic corporations seems a key to long-term success and viability. Second, separate program identity through a campus-wide office of international programs would support efforts for a continuing program and signal industry of the strong commitment to international endeavors. Third, curriculum must be examined and revised to more effectively reflect the needs of international businesses and organizations. Together, these three major thrusts could have a very positive effect on future placement and recruiting efforts and lead to the development of a complete educational program in international trade.

Table 1. Composition of Student Applicants in the International Intern Program, May 1984.

College	Number of Applicants	Percent of Applicants
Agricultural Sciences	11	8.0
Architecture	2	1.5
Commerce and Industry	30	22.1
Education	3	2.2
Engineering	53	29.0
Forest and Recreation Resources	2	1.5
Liberal Arts	26	19.1
Sciences	9	6.6
TOTAL	136	100.0

Table 2. Language Training of Applicants in International Intern Program, May 84[1]

College	French	German	Spanish	Other[2]	Total
		-percent-			
Agricultural Sciences	4.5	3.0	1.5	3.0	11.9
Commerce and Industry	13.4	4.5	9.0	1.5	28.4
Engineering	6.0	1.5	3.0	6.0	16.4
Forest and Recreation Resources	3.0	----	----	----	3.0
Liberal Arts	14.9	9.0	11.9	----	35.8
Sciences	1.5	1.5	----	1.5	4.5
TOTAL	43.3	19.4	25.4	11.9	100.0

[1]One or more years of formal training; 67 of the 136 applicants meet this requirement.

[2]Includes Italian and Japanese.

NOTES

[1]USDA, Foreign Agricultural Trade of the U.S., Monthly issues, 1983.

[2] Ibid.